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For: VERIFICATION

Dear Mr. Swiatek:

Thanks for giving me your feedback on my patent application number 10/710,996, and for talking with me on November 29. I really am glad for your help, and am trying to respond.

I'm sure it's been a while since we spoke; I'm twelve. My dad is helping me with this, and so is a friend of his, and he helped me a lot on the claims, but we don't really know what we're doing. I hope that you will continue to be patient with us as we work through things.

You seem to have three separate concerns about my application. First, it is anticipated by Lanham and similar patents. Second, it is too informal. Third, it is indefinite.

As far as the anticipation goes, I've tried to respond to your concerns by finding elements of my invention that are lacking in the other patents you cited. For example, I have incorporated your observation that my distribution wheel is horizontal, while Lanham's is vertical. I have also noticed that none of the art you cite appears to include a stirrer resting on the distribution wheel like mine (my component #204), so I have added that explicitly to my claims as well. Speicher includes an actuator (his component #24), but it is not a stirrer. It is blocked from rotation in his Figure 5 and is described in his line 4 of column 3 as activating the shaft and not as stirring the materials being distributed. Grether includes an agitator (his component #30) but Grether's agitator is above the distribution wheel and is described in his claims as being part of the hopper. It is described in line 60 of his column 2 as having inclined blades, which would preclude the agitator being in contact with the distribution mechanism as in my invention.

I've also added two method claims that are very specific about the intended field of use as a pet food distributor.

Second is the informality. I'm confused here because I can't find all of the semicolons that you talk about in your letter. But I've gone through all of my claims and tried to remove any unnecessary punctuation. I also found an extra word in the abstract, and I took that out, too.

Some of the extra punctuation may be because we had a lot of trouble using the online program to submit the original patent application. In the rewritten sections below, I've based all of my comments on the published patent application that appears on your web site.

Third, you say that claims 2 and 7 are indefinite. I have tried to fix that, too.

If you still think that I've missed something, please feel free to make any examiner's amendments that you think are appropriate. As I said, this is my first try at this and I'm not terribly concerned about the scope of the claims. Feel free to narrow them if you think that's necessary.

Here are the modifications I would like to make:

ABSTRACT

An animal feeder having ~~[[by]]~~ a distribution mechanism which allows food to be either dropped or scattered in random directions, providing exercise and entertainment for the animal. The feeder includes a food hopper supported by wheels, which when pushed or pulled by the user activate a distribution mechanism which releases food from the hopper at predictable intervals.

CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An animal feeder, comprising: a hopper for storing animal feed and having at least one opening for releasing the animal feed, a substantially horizontal rotatable distribution controller rotatably connected to the hopper and having an opening so that feed is released when the opening in the distribution controller rotates into alignment with the opening in the hopper; a stirrer supported by the distribution controller and rotatably mounted within the hopper and coupled to the rotation transfer means to encounter the animal feed stored therein and guide the feed into the hole in the hopper; a wheel supporting the animal feeder and adapted to rotate when the feeder is moved; and rotation transfer means for imparting the rotation of the wheel to the distribution controller and causing animal feed to be released as the feeder is moved, the distribution controller being configured to distribute the animal feed in a manner such that an animal proximate to the feeder is entertained and exercised in fetching the animal feed.

[The horizontal orientation of the distribution controller is supported by Figure 2 of the original specification. The stirrer is described in paragraph 0024 of the original specification. The idea of entertaining and exercising the pet is supported by paragraph 0008 of the original specification.]

2. (Currently amended) A feeder according to claim 1, wherein the opening of the hopper is ~~disposed within a bottom of the hopper; a hopper for storing animal feed, with an opening at the bottom for dispensing the feed~~ of the hopper.

3. (Original) A feeder according to claim 1, further comprising: a handle for controlling movement of the animal feeder.

4. (Original) A feeder according to claim 1, further comprising: a second wheel connected to the wheel with an axle.

5. (Original) A feeder according to claim 4, wherein the rotation transfer means comprises: a set of gears connected to the axle and imparting the axle's rotation to a center peg.

6. (Original) A feeder according to claim 1, further comprising: a distribution wheel disposed to encounter and scatter the released animal feed.
7. (Currently amended) A feeder according to claim [[1]] 6 further comprising: a guidance member, disposed between the distribution controller and the distribution wheel for guiding released food to the distribution wheel.
8. (Deleted) ~~A feeder according to claim 1, further comprising: a stirrer rotatably mounted within the hopper and coupled to the rotation transfer means to encounter the animal feed stored therein and guide the feed into the hole in the hopper.~~
9. (Original) A feeder according to claim 1, further comprising: a parking peg movably attached to the animal feeder and adapted to hold the feeder upright if the parking peg is in a parked position.
10. (New) A method of entertaining and exercising an animal, the method comprising: moving a feed dispenser in a first path; and dispensing feed from the feed dispenser such that the feed is distributed along a second path, the second path differing from the first path, such that the animal substantially follows the first path, deviating therefrom as needed to fetch the feed distributed along the second path.
- [This is supported by paragraph 0008 of the specification, describing entertaining and exercising the animal, and paragraph 0014 of the specification, describing two separate paths for the invention and the food.]
11. (New) A method as set forth in claim 10, wherein the second path is characterized in having random deviations from the first path.

[This is supported by paragraph 0027 of the specification, describing the scattering of food in random directions.]

Once again, thanks for your help and support with my patent application, I'm glad you can help. I appreciate it! I've attached my contact info so that if you want to fix something using an examiner's amendment, you know how to reach me.

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